

## CANYON LAKES ECHOES

*A newsletter from the Canyon Lakes Ranger District of the Arapaho and Roosevelt  
National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland*

### Inside this Issue:

- Big Elk Fire
- Healthy Forest Initiative
- Project Progress

Welcome to Issue #3 of the *Canyon Lakes Echoes* Newsletter. The Canyon Lakes Ranger District in Fort Collins produces this newsletter to share current information on the status of National Fire Plan and other vegetation management projects occurring on the District. Our goal is to provide information on a variety of topics.

## Contact Information

To discuss any of the projects from this newsletter or if you have questions please write or call:

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Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest  
1311 South College Ave.  
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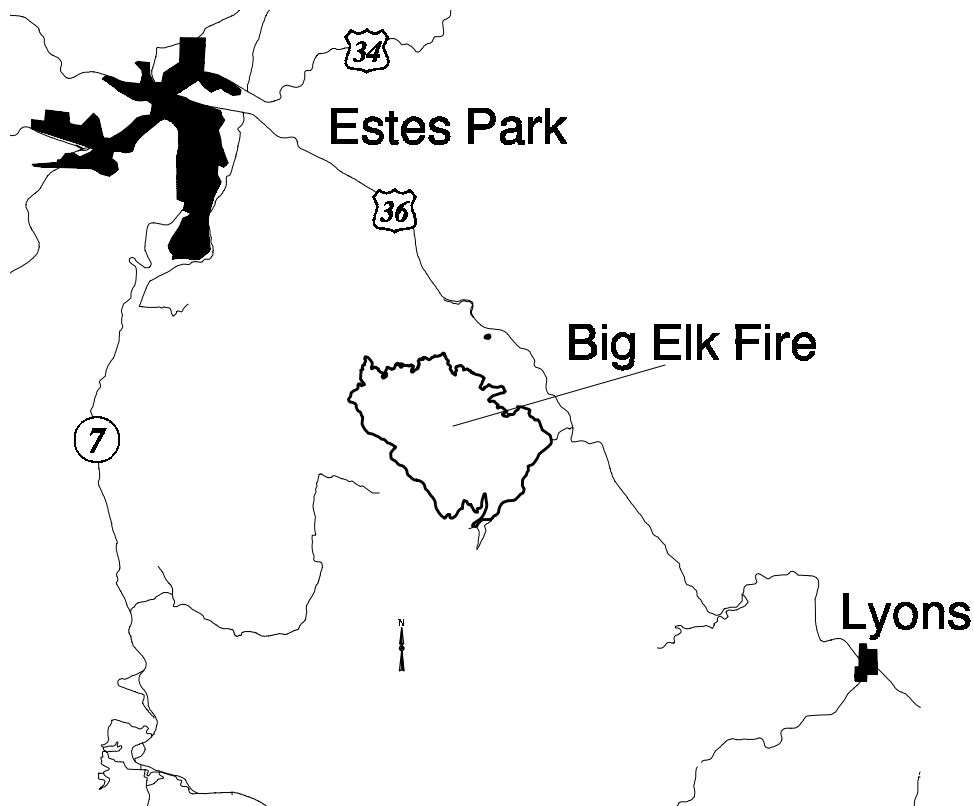
*At the Visitor Information Center (970) 498-1375 or on the web at:  
[www.fs.fed.us/arnf/districts/clrd/vegetation/index.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/arnf/districts/clrd/vegetation/index.htm)*



To:

## Big Elk Fire

The Big Elk fire occurred July 17 to July 27, 2002 south of Estes Park, CO near the Big Elk Meadows Subdivision. This fire was started by a catalytic converter from a jeep that had pulled off the road because of car trouble. The tall grass beside the road was dry enough to ignite from the catalytic converter and flames quickly spread to the nearby forest. At its peak, the blaze required 749 personnel including 4 type I crews, 2 dozers, 75 engines, and 14 aircraft. The fire forced the evacuation of Big Elk Meadows, Little Valley, various homes along HWY 36 and scorched 4,413 acres before being contained. *Our condolences go out to the families and friends of Rick Schwartz, Milt Stollak, and Gordon Knight. These three lost their lives in air accidents while fighting the Big Elk Fire.*



## Healthy Forest Initiative

Wildfires like the Big Elk Fire generated extreme fire behavior due to unseasonably warm, dry weather and low fuel moistures. Fuels accumulation (a result of years of fire suppression) also played a role in the intensity of the fire. Nationally, more than 5.9 million acres have burned, twice the annual acreage, and the fire season is not yet over. As a result of this record-breaking fire season, President Bush released his

administration's *Healthy Forests, An Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities*, on August 22, 2002.

The purpose of the initiative is to restore forest health by reducing the risk of catastrophic fires. The President directed Agriculture Secretary Veneman and Interior Secretary Norton to improve regulatory processes to generate timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results. Secretaries Veneman and Norton delivered a four-part proposal to Congress while testifying before the House Committee on Resources on fire-related topics, including the President's initiative on September 5, 2002.

The first piece of the proposal would expedite the reduction of hazardous fuels that pose the greatest risk to people, communities and the environment. These critical areas include community water supplies, the wildland-urban interface and areas affected by forest disease and insect infestations. Projects to reduce fuels in these areas would be selected through collaborative processes consistent with the 10-year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan (<http://www.fireplan.gov/10yrIPfinal.cfm>).

The next piece of the legislation would authorize the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to enter into long-term stewardship contracts with the private sector, nonprofit organizations and local communities. Stewardship contracts retain contractors to provide valuable services, thinning trees and brush and removing dead wood. Long-term contracts provide contractors the incentive to invest in equipment and infrastructure needed to productively use material incidentally generated from forest thinning to make wood products, such as particle board, or to produce energy.

The third proposal would repeal the Appeals Reform Act that was a rider to the fiscal year 1993 Interior Appropriations Bill, which imposes extraordinary procedural requirements on the Forest Service when administrative appeals are made on forest projects. The proposal would still allow an individual to appeal a forest decision.

The fourth proposal would establish common-sense rules for courts when deciding on challenges to fuels-reduction projects designed to restore fire-adapted forest and rangeland ecosystems. It would ensure that judges consider long-term risks of harm to people, property and the environment in court challenges based on alleged short-term risks of forest health projects.

*Information for this article was provided by the Office of the President of the United States, Big Elk Incident Summary, and the United States Department of the Interior, News Release Number 0369.02.*

## Project Progress

Dadd/Bennett Prescribed Fire Project: This project is located north of the Pingree Park Road. It is currently in the implementation phase with burning occurring when weather and fuel moisture conditions are favorable. Prescribed fire has been used on over 450 acres to reduce fuels and improve wildlife habitat with more treatment scheduled to take place this fall. Total project area is approximately 7,000 acres.

Lotta Bull Project: Timber will be harvested on about 86 acres with the intent of improving long-term forest health by removing diseased trees and reducing fuel loads to lower the wildfire hazard. The initial phases of the project are currently being implemented.

Pescado Timber Sale Project: Approximately 711 acres will be treated with timber harvest and prescribed fire activities to reduce fuels and decrease incidence of dwarf mistletoe. The initial phases of the project are currently being implemented.

Cache la Poudre Fire Restoration Project: This is a opportunity to restore fire as the dominant force of change on the wilderness landscape. Fuel reduction by prescribed fire is needed to accomplish this goal. The Environmental Assessment for this project may be available in the fall of 2002. Total project area is about 3,600 acres.

Stringtown Project: This is a forest thinning and prescribed fire project covering approximately 114 acres designed to reduce high hazard fuels, decrease incidence of disease, provide future old growth conditions, and to create a fuel break adjacent to private land. This project is being implemented.

Deadhorse Project: This is the first timber sale of the Sheep Creek I Project Area. It is about 260 acres of timber harvest activities to improve forest health and create natural mosaics on the landscape. The sale is scheduled to be offered fall of 2002.

Sheep Creek 2 Project: This project is currently in the planning stage. We are proposing a variety of vegetative management treatments including prescribed fire and timber harvesting to improve wildlife habitat, provide a mosaic of forest vegetation across the landscape, and reduce the high fuel hazard. An Environmental Assessment document has been rescheduled for fall/winter of 2002.

Seven Mile Stewardship Project: Vegetation management and prescribed fire will be used on approximately 1205 acres. A stewardship contract is a tool used to achieve National Forest goals while promoting involvement with local communities. We hope to use this type of project in the future to achieve National Fire Plan projects contributing to sustainable sources of income and local employment. Implementation of this project is underway and a walking tour is scheduled for October 19, 2002. The public is invited. Please contact Steve Johnson for more information at 498-1374.

Dowdy Lake Project: The purpose of this project is to reduce excessive fuels and improve forest health through thinning trees on about 270 acres of National Forest land adjacent to private land. Once the thinning is complete, the felled trees would be available for personal use firewood gathering by permit. This project is now being implemented.

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